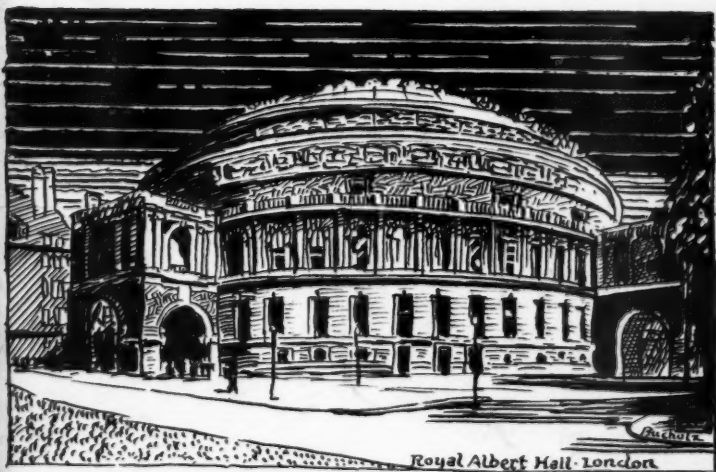


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The American RECORD GUIDE



Royal Albert Hall - London

FEBRUARY, 1953 - VOL. 19, No. 6

Edited by
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The American RECORD GUIDE



FEBRUARY 1953 • Vol. XIX, No. 6

formerly

The American Music Lover

On Listening

Editorial Notes

THROUGH the years, I have had many discussions with friends, acquaintances and associates as to which was the best way to enjoy music from records — alone, or in the company of others. Dr. Paul N Elbin, President of West Liberty State College and Music Editor of the *Wheeling, West Virginia News-Register*, states in an article recently that reproduced music is best “a la solitaire.”

“For at least 90 per cent of the record enthusiasts there’s no doubt about the answer,” he contends. “Even wives are problems for home music enthusiasts . . . Women for some reason, don’t like radio or record music as loud as men do. My wife says it’s because they have keener ears.” He speaks about the other fellow’s reactions to your equipment, the wide differences of opinion on its quality. Inevitably, he points out, somebody’s feelings get hurt.

“You can’t win,” says the Dr. Elbin. “All these questions of bass, treble, volume are subjective when it comes to reproduced music. Not only do people differ in their individual preferences, but their ears differ in sensitivity to certain sound frequencies.”

Of course, the good doctor is right about equipment. Listeners become ear-conditioned and they tend to be sensitive about their own reproducing outfits, particularly if it has cost them a lot of money. But “records best a la solitaire,” which is the title of Dr. Elbin’s article is provocative. I would certainly like to hear from a few readers on this, especially

some of the girls. I suspect there is not a critic, working with reproduced music, who has not had some trouble with his wife. My own threatens to give a luncheon for a dozen of the wives of leading record critics in this part of the country to talk over the situation. Some of these ladies claim that records are invading every room in the house and the sounds that they have to endure at all hours of the day are often intolerable. Most of this is gross exaggeration, for I, like many other colleagues, play records only for a prescribed period of time and not every day. These gals want to get together just to let out some pent-up feelings. Says one, “We’re competing with too many prima donnas of late.”

Well, I suspect that luncheon will come off. When my wife gets an idea, she usually carries it through. I have a bet with a colleague that the gals will turn on my equipment, just to satisfy themselves whether it’s as good or better than their own husband’s. I am going to bribe the “lady-in-waiting” for the luncheon to let me know whether an argument results, and which wife wins or comes out near the top.

I suspect that in listening to some long recorded works, most would find greater enjoyment alone. Yet, I know many husbands and wives who do this without interruption from each other. I know others that cannot see eye to eye, or hear ear to ear, and talk incessantly. I know friends that get-together and enjoy a

(Continued on page 199)

LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI

Talks on Music and its Reproduction with the Editor

Part II

IN HIS BOOK *Music for All of Us* Stokowski, in his chapter on "Recorded Music," points out the important differences between concert halls and living rooms in relation to recordings made in the concert hall, and the equally important differences between concert hall and living room dynamics.

"The average air volume in these halls," he states, "is approximately 800,000 cubic feet. The air volume of an average living room is about 2,000 cubic feet, so that

the air volume of a concert hall is about 400 times larger than the average living room. If we reduce the dynamic range in proportion, it would be less than one decibel. Obviously, this would not permit any difference between the loudest and softest, but would make the music heard in an average-size living room sound monotonous and dull."

Through the years, the conductor points out, the study of dynamics in reproduction has played a major role in developing realism in recording. Experiments to find the maximum dynamic range best

Stokowski and "His Orchestra" recording

(photo by Joe Covello)



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suited to the average-size living room, with its absorbing material — furniture, rugs, curtains, etc. — have been given great consideration, as has also been the reflecting surfaces like walls and ceilings. The interested reader will find the experiments discussed at some length in the chapter, "Recorded Music," in the conductor's book.

There is a world of difference between the early electrical recordings with two-dimensional dynamics — *mezzo-forte* and *forte* — and the modern recordings with their range of dynamics that really gives us a true *pianissimo* and a true *fortissimo*. Naturally, wider range has not only added greatly to realism in sound but also to the music coloration, purer tonal quality and improved dynamics. Today we hear a true *crescendo* and *diminuendo* not possible in the early days of electrical recording, and only moderately successful in the first improved dynamic recordings made before and during the war, before a full frequency range was adopted.

Degree of Loudness

"Different equipment naturally gives different reproducing results," Dr. Stokowski points out. "Even the same equipment in two different rooms does not reproduce the same. I have often been asked to what degree of loudness music should be reproduced in the home. This is a personal matter, as some people enjoy music played at higher levels than others. Some are acutely affected by higher frequencies when the music is played, too loudly, others are not. It should be the free choice of every listener to set his controls to reproduce as loudly or as softly as he wishes. I fully realize that a compromise often has to be made, as a husband and wife may not agree on the amount of loudness. While a degree of loudness should be maintained to sustain realism in reproduction in the home, it should not have the effect on any listener similar to that of hearing someone shouting on the telephone, which is fatiguing to the nerves.

"It is true, as I pointed out in my book, that some of us like to hear the loud parts

of the music with very full volume so that we are enveloped by it — somewhat the same sensation as swimming under water. On the other hand, others like the sound less obtrusive; more as a soft accompaniment to what they are doing. Perhaps the average volume range would be 30 decibels. This would allow most recordings to sound well in all kinds of living rooms, and be close to the ideal volume range for all kinds of people. It should be borne in mind that there is a world of difference between listening to an orchestra in a concert hall and from records. In the concert hall, we hear binaurally — that is with two ears — which gives two slightly different impressions of sound.

"In the concert hall, we have true *tonal perspective* because the various sound streams come from different directions to our two ears. The present system of recording is monaural — equivalent of one-ear hearing, because the sound of the music which we hear from a record, or for that matter from radio or television, is one directional.

"When we hear music in a concert hall, or anywhere else that a group of live musicians are assembled, we hear it binaurally.

Sound from All Sides

"In the concert hall, music comes to us *reflected* from many surfaces — the several walls and the ceiling. For this reason, our hearing impressions are frequently very different. We might, for example, be closer to one side of the hall than the other. This would strengthen the sound to one ear and make the sound to the other ear not quite so strong because of its more distant reflection. When we listen to an orchestra in the concert hall, the music is coming to us from players on the right side of the stage, in the center, on the left side and from the back. Our ears can distinguish the direction of these different sound positions. The blend, which is affected by the time the music reaches us, give us our sense of *tonal perspective*. Now all these varying impressions of music, which reach our ears from many directions, create a wonderfully rich pattern of sound — this being bi-

naural hearing.

"Listening to the orchestra from a recording, we cannot distinguish the directional characteristics of the differently seated players — instead we are conscious of only one stream of sound, which is monaural hearing."

In recent years, Dr. Stokowski has made extensive experiments in the seating of the orchestra. Though there are many listeners who contend that the tonal qualities resulting from his seating arrangement are greatly improved, there are nonetheless some musicians and critics who misconstrue his motives and question their efficacy in practice.

"There is no arbitrary motive behind my seating arrangement. When people ask me, why I change the old seating, I am tempted to respond with the question — why retain the traditional seating? — which was predetermined so long ago by Monteverdi, who naturally could not foresee the growth of the orchestras of the future. Most listeners are unaware, and many musicians do not take into consideration the fact, that every instrument has its own directionality of tone. In the so-called classical seating, the directionality of tone from many of the instruments is in complete opposition to others. This does not permit a truly optimum blending of tonal qualities. To achieve, insofar as possible, that optimum blending, I have found it necessary to alter the classical seating.

On Tradition

"When an artist opposes tradition, he opens himself to ridicule as well as praise. It is a mistake to allow tradition, as Nietzsche once said, to become holy and inspire awe, for the older it becomes and 'the more remote its origin, the more confused that origin is.'

"In recording, I seat the orchestra totally differently from the seating in the concert hall. In the concert hall, I consider the directionality of each instrument, or group of instruments, most important. The sound should be directed one way — forward, not reflected from a dozen different places — into the auditorium. This seating, of course, differs

greatly from the so-called classical seating, where the second violins are playing up-stage while the first violins are playing out towards the audience, resulting in great lack of balance. My seating arrangement in the concert hall rectifies such traditions in the interest of tonal balance.

"In recording, I seat the orchestra differently for each composition being recorded. This is done in accordance with the nature of the music and its orchestration. In recording, it is necessary to consider the character of the microphones. The new Telefunken microphones, used by RCA Victor, are in many ways quite different from the best type of ribbon microphones, formerly in use. One must consider directionality of tone in relation to the one or more microphones in use. For all of these reasons, a standard or routine seating will not give the best musical results. Always, the seating should be flexible as should also be the microphones' placement. In pursuing this policy I believe that the optimum blending of tonal sound and the best balance is obtained.

Artistic Results Count

"In the final analysis, it is the artistic results with which the true artist is concerned. It is my firm conviction that no artist need be hampered by the venerability of tradition nor the persistent reverence given it."

Stokowski proudly points out that he has participated in recording in its first three stages and expresses the hope that he will be able to do so in its coming fourth stage, of which he speaks enthusiastically. The first stage was of course the acoustic era, when the horn was used. The second stage, electrical recording, Stokowski states was revolutionary: "It was nothing short of a miracle at the time to realize that a steel needle could scratch into wax the sound waves of a whole orchestra, and that from the finished record one could hear the sounds of that full orchestra reproduced. The third stage of recording — the present one — has displaced the wax disc for tape. Passing tape through the magnetic field has brought about a great

advance in recording technique and quality — it has opened endless possibilities. Long ago, we discovered that because cross-modulation had the tendency to so mix the tonal characteristics of the various instruments, they were all inclined to sound alike. For example the flute, oboe and clarinet have each their own characteristic tone, and the contrast of these different tones gives variety to music, just as the contrasts of color give variety to a painting. When cross-modulation reduces these differences of tone quality so that they tend to sound alike, there is a 'grayness' in the music, which reduces its vitality and beauty of sound. Magnetic recording on tape, because of its much higher sensitivity to extremely high frequencies, has helped us to overcome these bad results of cross-modulation.

"The fourth stage of recording will be on tape or film, because these media can be ideally cut to the length of the music instead of the music being cut to the time limitations of a disc recording, as is done



Dick Mohr following the score

at present. The fourth stage will also advance binaural reproduction, which corresponds — as I have previously pointed out — to the way we hear music in the concert hall with our two ears. All the systems of the past and present are monaural, which is one-eared or one-directional hearing.

"By recording on film and giving each instrument or group of instruments a separate channel, then blending all of these channels together in perfect proportion or balance, an ideal clarity of elements in the sound to be reproduced can be achieved. This we partly achieved in the Walt Disney film recording of *Fantasia*.

"There will be a fifth stage, but I do not yet know what it will be. Nothing, particularly creative as well as reproductive art, ever stands still."

Because of the wide admiration for the recordings of "Stokowski and his Orchestra" which the conductor has been making in recent years for RCA Victor, I asked him how these were accomplished.

"A good recording is the result of close accord and cooperation between conductor, musicians, and several technical key men. I have worked for many years with Mr. Pulley, Victor's chief engineer,



Albert Pulley

Chief Engineer, RCA Victor

February, 1953

and know him to be one of the finest workers in the field. He does not apparently officiate in the recording proceedings, for he has special men assigned to all important posts. Seemingly he stands, listens and watches. If anything goes wrong, or needs to be done, however, he jumps in like lightning and does it himself.

"Lew Layton, recording engineer, is at the controls. He knows instinctively what to do, and frequently he anticipates something I particularly want. There is very little monitoring done today with the *New Orthophonic* system, which Mr. Pulley worked out. RCA Victor today uses Telefunken microphones, one or several, depending upon the character of the music. These are all properly placed by Mr. Layton before the recording session, according to predetermined plans, as is the seating of the musicians.

"Then there is Dick Mohr, who sits quietly at a desk following the score. He times the music and informs me through the intercommunicating system of any variation in timing or any tonal imbalance which he knows to be contrary to what we have planned. Mr. Mohr also instinctively knows what to do. It is wonderful to work with these three men who are like one happy family.

"With such experts as these three co-operating, if we do not make a good recording — the fault is mine."

MONTEVERDI'S Communicative Art

MONTEVERDI: *Magnificat* (for 8 voices, and 2 trumpets, trombone and strings); *Domine ad adiuvandum* (for 4 voices, and 2 oboes, horn, and strings); *Nigra sum* (for soprano and strings); *Ave maris Stella* (for 8 voices and strings); Vocal Soloists and Instrumental Ensemble conducted by Angelo Ephrikian. Period LP 558, \$5.95.

▲**HISTORIANS** and some critics in the early years of this century tended to dis-

miss Monteverdi's link between two greater phases of musical thought. Not until Malipiero re-examined the music of Monteverdi and began his careful editing of the composer's work did the musical world turn a heeding ear to the quality and to the unaffected truth of Monteverdi's "musical communication of human forces." In the 1920s, the French critic Henri Prunieres turned his attention to the composer and wrote his book, *Monteverdi — His Life and Work* (E.P. Dutton & Co.). Since then, several other books on the composer have appeared — the most recent being Leo Schrade's *Monteverdi, Creator of Modern Music* (W.W. Norton & Co.). The subtitle of Prof. Schrade's book is well chosen, for Monteverdi was a modernist in his day, who with his daring harmonic developments pointed the way to the future. Gradually critics have discovered his genius and properly evaluated his art. Since the 1920s, the phonograph has perpetuated his art for the enjoyment and enlightenment of the discerning listener. It is a mistake to consider Monteverdi's music as confined to esoteric art, for it speaks with "complete truthfulness, a profound relevancy to the dramatic symbols," as my late friend Paul Rosenfeld once said, "with which the composer has connected them." He never strove for effect. In every text he set to music, he linked himself irrevocably with its inner life, its emotional implications and symbolic dramaticism. Knowingly he blended his more modern style with the workable elements of the older style.

The setting of the *Magnificat* has the power of inner drama, for there is greater variety in expression here than we have heard elsewhere in Monteverdi's previous secular forms. It is a moving work — a religious effusion, both sublime and sensuous. The other selections in the church service actually precede the *Magnificat*. *Domine ad adiuvandum* is a response followed by the doxology *Gloria Patri*; the *Nigra sum* is an antiphon. These are parts of the vesper service, and *Ave maris stella* is a hymn. In the first of these, Monteverdi contrasts the vocal chanting with a lively rhythmic pattern in the

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instrumental group. The Antiphon employs only one voice and strings, while the hymn employs eight voices and strings. Thus, he varies the style of his service. Whether written at Mantua or later at Venice, this music was known in the latter city for, as Prunieres says, it is typical of the music performed at St. Mark's during magnificent ceremonies." It is music of the Renaissance with a true religious splendor.

The recording is well balanced and realistic. The performances are well directed; Ephrikian knows the style and he has competent performers at his disposal. The singers are best in the group works. The soprano entrusted with *Nigra sum* tends to some uncertainty and does not maintain a smooth line. There is a question whether a choral group would not have been better and also whether the organ should not have been included. However, there would seem to be some license in presenting the music as heard here, and when all is said and done, listening to the *Magnificat* from this record remains a stirring experience which offsets arguments for or against its presentation. The Latin texts and translations are given on the cover. —P.H.R.

MONTEVERDI: Vocal and Instrumental Works — *O Mirtillo, Mirtill'anima mia* (Madrigal for 5 voices); *Era l'anima mia* (Madrigal for 5 voices); *Damigella tutta bella* (Scherzo musicale for 3 voices); *O, come vaghi* (Madrigal for 2 voices); *Sfogava con le stelle* (Madrigal for 5 voices); *Dolcissimo uscignolo* (Canto amoroso a 5 voci, cantato a voce piena, alla francese), *Interrotte speranze* (Madrigal for 2 voices); *A un giro sol de bell'occhi lucenti* (Madrigal for 5 voices); *Quel sguardo sdegnosello* (Scherzo musicale in stile recitativo); *Su su pastorelli rezzosi* (Love song for 3 voices); *Qui rise tirsi* (Concertato Madrigal for 5 Voices); Vocal and Instrumental Ensemble under the direction of Nadia Boulanger. Decca LP DL-9627, \$5.85.

▲THE RECORDING is intimate in quality, suggesting a small room. The singing is delicate, refined and prevailing

ingly *dolce*. I think this tends to evoke a feeling of preciousness in compositions of this kind. What I said previously about the Couraud choral group in the *Lagrime d'amante al sepolcro dell'amata* (Vox LP 6670) is applicable here: the expressive qualities of the music are acquired more through the sensitive direction of the conductor than through any emotional responses from the singers derived from the texts. This ensemble is a well balanced one — a vocally smooth one. Fortunately, the choice and arrangement of the works allow for contrast, especially since some employ an instrumental ensemble or a harpsichord. Mlle. Boulanger performs on the latter instrument, which rightfully belongs to this music. The use of the piano in her first Monteverdi collection (Victor set 496 — now excised), a departure from tradition, was the only serious criticism against an otherwise wonderful program. Mlle. Boulanger has arranged the instrumental accompaniments with discretion and stylistic taste, including a harp which fits ideally into the ensemble. As the program unfolds, one realizes the "devotion to the art of music" which Boulanger shows; this program must have been selected with considerable care and arranged for consistent contrast in mood as well as style. The manner in which she climatically builds her program on both sides toward two more imposing works serves to make its terminal points truly memorable. The concertato *Qui rise Tirsi*, from Book VI, is a moving and powerful work — a fine example of Monteverdi's objective of conveying human passion. Though the pathos here could have been intensified, the presentation is obviously the work of an artist of intelligence and culture, whose innate musicality remains unassailable. This is a record to place along side of the Randolph Singers' fine Monteverdi program (Westminster LP 5171), reviewed last month.

An interesting contrast between interpretative approaches to the same madrigal is found in the only duplication of Randolph's program — *A un giro sol de bell'occhi lucenti*. The listener, acquiring

both this disc and the other, will find there is more intensity in the Randolph presentation, a truer feeling for the inner passion, particularly in the last two lines where the lover speaks of the loved one's cruelty. The daring dissonance of the lines suggests the emotional intensity the composer wished to be applied. It is too bad that the present disc does not have the texts and translations, to say nothing of explanatory notes, like those that accompany the Randolph record.

—P.H.R.

A NOTE ON THE "TROJANS" RECORD

by Jacques Barzun

THOUGH the ethics of publishing took about a century to establish themselves, the comparable code for recordings imposed itself within a miraculously short time. The buyer of modern discs need not beware: he can be reasonably sure that he is getting what the label proclaims.

This assumption no doubt explains why, having written the critical notes for the Westminster recording of Berlioz's *Les Troyens à Carthage*, I have received a number of queries about its completeness. "Where," I am asked in tones ranging from the plaintive to the indignant, "is the Trojan March?" I am of course delighted that the interest in Berlioz's music leads the inquiring listener to the scores. But to answer the question calls for a fairly elaborate bit of history which I should like to set down here in all its (if I may use the word) completeness.

Let me say first that from the outset the directors of the Westminster Company as well as the conductor, Hermann Scherchen, were determined to do the Berlioz music drama exactly as written. They nearly succeeded — including all but fifty bars. This omission, not of the March but of the opening stanza of Hylas'

song in Act III, though unfortunate, is in no way their fault, and since we have the music of the other two stanzas, which despite differences of detail matches the first, the recording may be said to be complete though not perfect.

Now for the explanation of the trouble, which goes back to the piratical practices of French music publishers. The firm of Choudens Fils, which contracted to publish Berlioz's full score, never did so. They printed a few copies, which they withheld from sale but hire out to performing groups, thus retaining unjustifiably the monopoly of a work that is actually in the public domain. Now the Paris "hire copy" of the score and parts has for seventy-five years been the plaything of managers and conductors. It is one of them who *glued together* the pages bearing the first stanza of Hylas's song; it is the same man or his twin who transferred the "Royal Hunt and Storm" from the beginning of Act II to the beginning of Act III; it is he again who inserted, without any authority, the concert version of the "Trojan March" as an entr'acte to precede Act IV.

Not questioning these alterations, the Paris performers working for Westminster produced a tape recording which faithfully followed the manhandled score. When I heard it, I at once pointed out the dislocations and the New York authorities immediately restored the *Chasse Royale* to its proper place and cut out the redundant March, which intolerably delayed the denouement. But there was nothing to be done about the missing stanza.

Too Many Scores

So much for the recording. There remains one puzzle, which the attentive reader will have noticed in my statement. If the scores of *Les Troyens* are kept by the Paris publishers like Top Secret documents, how do American listeners come to challenge the fidelity of the recording? The answer is: either they have seen the Paris Opera version, heard Beecham and the BBC, or more likely, have looked up what they fondly think is the piano-and-vocal score. Actually, there are ten or twelve divergent issues of the reduced

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score all by the self-same non-publisher of the full score.

They differ in format and contents, order of scenes and length of recitatives and orchestral passages. Whenever a revival of *Les Troyens* has taken place since Berlioz's day, Choudens has brought out a few copies of the vocal score hashed up to conform to the mutilation of the moment. Through the second-hand market these variants have got into libraries and private hands, completing the confusion which started in 1863 when the first manager began tailoring *Les Troyens* to suit himself. It is in fact to him that we owe the division of a great work into two parts, thus causing the public to imagine that Berlioz knew no better than to begin his exposition undramatically with long processions and only one protagonist on the stage. The first act on our discs is in reality a third act.

Clearly, what is needed to set all things right is:

- (1) a Westminster recording of Part I, *The Fall of Troy*, and
- (2) a faithful miniature score of the whole work as it stands, with all Berlioz's final corrections, in the Library of the Paris Conservatory.

SOME RCA VICTOR "TREASURY" ISSUES

THE MODERN WONDERS of high fidelity LP recording frequently obscure the more purely intrinsic musical considerations that should enter into our choice of favored records. Without minimizing the obvious advantage of reproducing a given piece of music with the best possible fidelity, there is nonetheless a danger of being taken in by brilliant reproduction of inadequate performances or shoddy music. Actually, careful consideration of any record calls for a balancing of many factors, and most of our final choices represent a compromise which falls short of the ideal combination of intrinsic musical value, artistry of per-

formance, and vitality of reproduction.

With this in mind, let us look at RCA-Victor's latest addition to its Collectors' Issue — twelve LP records of dubbings from 78 rpm. records. These range in age from the ancient Menuhin-Enesco *Bach Concerto for Two Violins* to the Stokowski record of Gliere's "*Ilya Mourometz*". Generally speaking, the transfer from 78 rpm. has been well accomplished: the technique involved seems to have become so stabilized that the only variation in quality is that inherent in the original masters.

None of these records, obviously, represents anything approaching a first-class modern record. But several are worthy of consideration, either because the quality of artistic interpretation is of a uniquely high order, or because the performance itself is so much better than subsequent LPs that considerations of reproduction are outweighed.

BEETHOVEN SONATA 'SOCIETY',
Vols. I and II; Artur Schnabel (piano).
Vol. I — *Sonatas No. 32 in C minor, Op. 111; No. 27 in E minor, Op. 90; No. 24 in F sharp minor, Op. 78.* LCT-1109, \$5.72; **Vol. II** — *Sonatas No. 30 in E, Op. 109; No. 13 in E flat, Op. 27, No. 1; 9 in E, Op. 14, No. 1.* LCT-1110, \$5.72.

▲OF FOREMOST importance in this series are these two reissues from the Beethoven Sonata Society. Recorded in 1932, they were the only volumes of this series issued in limited edition, though HMV has reissued them recently on 78 rpm. as a Memorial Edition. Tonally these records lack modern piano brilliance, but the piano tone, restricted as it is, has the warmth and balance characteristic of HMV's excellent reproduction for the time. Interpretatively these two records contain some of Schnabel's greatest artistry. You will find a more complete and accurate account of the exact note-values in the more recent LP releases by Appelbaum, Backhaus, or Kempff, but none approach Schnabel's inspired mastery of the grand line. Only in the

work of Solomon do we find anything approaching Schnabel's interpretative projection, and even he seems shortwinded and stiff beside the older pianist in such works as the late sonatas here.

BACH: *Violin cello Suites Nos. 2 in C major, and 3 in D minor*; Pablo Casals. LCT 1104, \$5.72.

▲THE SAME is true of these Casals performances. Greenhouse and Starker have made outstanding high-fidelity LPs of some or all of these *Suites*, and their versions present the upper harmonics of true violoncello tone far more realistically than Casals' reproduction permits. But the incomparable Catalan's artistry makes his elderly versions worthy of more than cursory consideration. In this writer's opinion, these *Suites* are dangerously close to the borderline of boredom, and they require the mastery of a Casals to save them.

RACHMANINOFF: *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, and *Concerto No. 1 in F sharp minor*; Rachmaninoff (piano) with the Philadelphia orchestra conducted by Stokowski and Ormandy, respectively. LCT 1118, \$5.72.

▲THIS is another case of unique interpretative artistry surmounting the age of recording. Though several, including Rubinstein and Kapell, have essayed the *Rhapsody* — thought by many to be Rachmaninoff's most considerable work — more recently, none has approached either his projection of the score's inner meaning or his virtuosic mastery of the instrument; nor does any other have the benefit of Stokowski's uniquely perceptive and highly contributive collaboration. The *Concerto* is a work of lesser stature, but, at the moment, this is the only recording available.

MOZART: *Violin Concerto in D major, K.218*; **MEDELSSOHN:** *Violin Concerto in E minor*; Fritz Kreisler with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Ronald and Sargent respectively. LCT 1117, \$5.72.

▲THERE have been Kreisler recordings — notably the great but ancient Berlin records of the Beethoven and Brahms concertos — which would rank with the best interpretations on discs, but the Mozart and Mendelssohn here are not among them. Both have been recorded for LP by such artists as Szigeti, Stern, Heifetz, and Menuhin, and in every case with better reproduction. Whatever musical advantages Kreisler possesses are outweighed by the mechanical deficiencies present here.

None of the remaining items seem to merit the special consideration given the above. Several, like the Anderson *Great Songs of Faith* and Bach *Arias* (LCT 1111), the Flagstad-Melchior duets from *Lohengrin* and *Parsifal* (LCT 1105), and Stokowski's reading of Gliere's "*Ilya Mourametz*" (LCT 1106) represent top artists in some of their best recorded performances of the past. Others, notably the Heifetz record of the Sibelius *Violin Concerto* and Chausson *Concerto for Piano, Violin, and Quartet*, (LCT 1113) and the Menuhin collaborations with Landowska and Enesco (LCT 1120) are strictly for special enthusiasts of these artists. The Piatigorsky performances of the Brahms *E minor Sonata* and Schumann *A minor Concerto* (LCT 1119) are very much better than their LP competition; those who want these works badly enough will probably prefer this interpretation.

The Lotte Lehmann disc — a collection of songs by Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and Wolf, — was not available for review at this writing. (LCT 1108).

These Collectors' records are certainly justified when they offer unique and towering artistry of the order of Casals, Rachmaninoff, or Schnabel. Such as these run less chance of being displaced by later duplications, no matter how well recorded, and they will always be valued as touchstones of great and unique artistic interpretation. Others, like the Piatigorsky and Kreisler records, run the danger of being subsequently duplicated by superior reproduction and comparable artistry.

OPERA SPOTLIGHT

MOZART: *Il Re Pastore, K. 208* (Festive Play in 2 Acts); Agnes Giebel (Amyntas), Kaethe Nentwig (Elisa), Hetty Pluemacher (Tamyris), Werner Hohmann (Agenor), Albert Weikenmeier (Alexander the Great), Tonstudio Orchestra, Stuttgart, conducted by Gustav Lund. Period LP set 553, 2 discs, \$11.90.

▲THIS OPERA, known to us all as the occasion for one of Mozart's finest lyrical inspirations, turns out to be charming if not overpowering. Perhaps this is due in part at least to the casting, which calls for three sopranos and two tenors, not a strikingly varied combination. *L'amero, saro costante* is not the only good aria in the piece, though of course it remains the best.

Much the best work in this set is done by the conductor, who gets a nice melodic curve into the orchestral playing, and probably is responsible for whatever of the singing rises above a fair average. The voices are all modest and sweet, used with taste and the will if not the power to conquer the rapid passages. There is some uncentered tone here and there. The *secco* recitatives have all been omitted, and only once is a singer allowed the privilege of an indicated *cadenza*. This one case is in the celebrated aria, but a shorter passage is used than the familiar nineteenth-century article long identified with the piece. A few *appoggiaturas* are given in the course of the score.

—P.L.M.

PONCHIELLI: *La Gioconda* (Opera in 4 Acts); Anita Corridori (Gioconda), Rina Cavallari (La Cieca), Fernando Corena (Alvise), Miriam Pirazzini (Laura), Giuseppe Campora (Enzo), Anselmo Colzani (Barnaba), Professori d'Orchestra and Artisti del Coro of La Scala, conducted by Armando La Rosa Parodi. Urania LP set 229, 4 discs, \$23.80.

▲AS an old time operagoer, I have memories of Destinn, Amato and Caruso, Ponselle and Gigli and others in *La Gioconda*. Raisa and Bettina Freeman were equally great singers of the title role. This is the type of opera which asks for great singers, otherwise its melodrama and sentiment may not be appreciated. Competency in a performance is not enough, one wants really great singing.

The reproduction in this set is realistic, but the orchestral playing has not the sonorous richness that the score requires. There are only about half of the La Scala forces employed here and, though the recording has been successfully boosted to give plenty of sound, it lacks essential quality. La Parodi's conducting is first-class; he knows his way around this *verismo* drama.

The singers are not what an old timer, familiar with the opera at the Metropolitan, La Scala or Convent Garden, can favor. Campora, who has a good voice though throaty in production, is not the ideal Enzo — he just misses the heroic touch needed. But he and Colzani, as Barnaba, are highly competent. The finest singing is the Alvise of Corena, a truly musicianly artist. Pirazzini's Laura is impressive. Anita Corridori's Gioconda is uneven. She lacks the ability to color her voice, and she spreads her high tones to a point which makes them thin sounding in comparison to her middle range. Cavallari's Cieca is unendurable. It is only fair to tell the reader that Cetra is bringing out this opera soon with one of the greatest living sopranos of our time, Maria Callas.

—P.H.R.

ROSSINI: *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Opera in 2 Acts); Erminio Benatti (Fiorello), Nicola Monti (Count Almaviva), Gino Bechi (Figaro), Victoria de los Angeles (Rosina), Melchiorre Luise (Dr. Bartolo), Anna Maria Canali (Berta), Nicolo Rossi-Lemeni (Don Basilio), Milan Symphony Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Tullio Serafin. RCA-Victor LP set LM-6104, 3 discs, \$17.16.

▲IN THE SPRING of 1951, Cetra brought out a recording of this popular

opera which received wide praise. It was an all-around first-rate Italian performance, featuring the gifted mezzo-soprano Giulietta Simonato, a vital and personable artist, as Rosina. Here, we have the gracious and charming de los Angeles, whose voice in its lower range suggests the mezzo and in the high range has the delectable beauty of the true soprano. While she adheres mostly to the original tessitura of the role, as laid out by the composer, she uses some of the *floritura* adopted by later-day sopranos. Of the two Rosinas, hers is the most winning to date on LP records, notably for its subtle coloration of work and phrase. Yet, there is a vibrant quality to Simonato's Rosina which I admire — a passionate intensity reminiscent of the artistry of the late Supervia.

In the name part, Cetra has the young baritone Taddei, whose Figaro is in the best tradition. Here, we have Bechi who, in my estimation, lacks the freshness and flexibility of voice for the role. His tone throughout is unyieldingly hard, coarse and blatant. He has no *pianissimo*. Moreover, he is far from the musician that Taddei is. The latter, as I said originally, sings very easily and naturally, and brings to his ready volatility some ingratiating *pianissimo* as well as rich full *fortissimo*. Bechi is decidedly the weak member of this cast.

On the other hand, Infantile was the weak member of Cetra's cast. Fortunately, we have here a fresh, young tenor voice singing with ease and often beauty of tone in a more stylistic manner. Nicola Monti is indeed a more personable artist. Melchiorre Luise's Dr. Bartolo is well sung, but it is the gifted Rossi-Lemeni as Don Basilio who emerges as the singing actor *par excellence*.

While Cetra's set was splendidly recorded with plenty of realism, this set shows the advance made in operatic recording in the past two years. The balance between singers and orchestra is good, though I think the voices are too prominent for that kind of realism which exists in the opera house. Yet, the degree of reverberation does suggest the theatre.

With gifted singers like de los Angeles,

Rossi-Lemeni, Luise and Monti, it may seem strange to cite the star of the production as the conductor. But from the opening to the closing note of the score, it seems to me that Tullio Serafin dominates as only one other conductor could — Arturo Toscanini. His superb discipline and incisive direction represents a type of musicality all too seldom found on records.

—P.H.R.

RAVEL: *L'Heure Espagnole* (Opera in 1 Act); Janine Linda (Conception), Andre Dran (Gonzalve), Jean Mollien (Torquemada), Jean Hoffman (Ramiro), Lucien Mans (Don Inigo Gomez), L'Orchestre Radio-Symphonique de Paris conducted by Rene Leibowitz. Vox LP PL-7880, \$5.95.

▲RAVEL'S opera-comique is delightfully amusing entertainment in the theatre. From the recording, a libretto is essential to its full enjoyment, for Ravel's piquant fantasy about a clockmaker and his amorous wife is full of subtle wit that only an intimate knowledge of the text reveals. A libretto is not furnished with this fine recording, but it can be obtained. Its Spanish locale permits the composer some picturesque touches but, by and large, the music does not aim to exploit the Spanish flavor. It is ingeniously written with none of the insipidity of light opera or the vulgarity of traditional *opera-bouffe*. The vocal writing flavors the zest of the text; the orchestra is deftly colored and smoothly contrived. Without falling into the pattern of a conversational piece, Ravel has kept the music vivacious with a discernment and elegance representative of his best work.

The recording is excellent. The performance is a good one. The singers are agreeable to the ear with none emerging as a central character by virtue of especial vocal virtuosity. Casting of this manner would be fatal to this score. Leibowitz gives a smooth and assured rendition of the instrumental part of the opera, which is of equal importance to the work of the singers. The present performance is definitely an improvement over an earlier one. *L'Heure Espagnole* will grow on one with repeated hearings (partic-

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ularly if one acquires the libretto or the score). It is a work that can continually reveal ingenious delicacies of subtle wit in repeated hearings. What delicious reflections it evokes!

—P.H.R.

WAGNER: *Seigfried* — *Awakening Scene*; *Die Goetterdaemmerung* — *Bruennhilde's Immolation Scene*; Kirsten Flagstad and Set Svanholm with George Sebastian and Wilhelm Furtwaengler conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra. RCA Victor LP LHMV-1024, \$5.95.

▲THE RECORDING in both scenes is richly sonorous and realistic. There was an edge on the 78 rpm version of the *Immolation Scene* which is not apparent on the LP, properly balanced. RCA Victor's regular turn-over seems ideally suited to these HMV reproductions. Flagstad is assuredly the queen of Wagnerian singers. Hers is a truly heroic voice, and her *Immolation Scene* is an unexcelled performance — one of sheer vocal radiance — which may well be the envy of many a singer for years to come. Furtwaengler conducts like a Valhalla God, giving the Goddess of the occasion finely shaded background and solid support. In the last scene of *Siegfried*, Flagstad is a Goddess awakening. There is calm repose and magnificent female dignity in her singing, yet here for some reason she gives emotionally less than in the *Immolation Scene*. Sebastian is a competent conductor, but the pace he sets is on the slow side — perhaps in agreement with the soprano. He tends to be por-

tentious at times when on his own without the voices, but he does give solid support to his singers and even manages to convey some of the ecstasy of the lyrical sections.

It seems a pity that Melchior and Flagstad in their prime did not make this scene for recording. Wagnerites will know his performance with Florence Easton who, despite a strained final high note, was emotionally thrilling. Flagstad has greater opulence of voice and radiant high notes; the supreme artist stylistically and vocally. It is a pity that the *Awakening Scene* had to be broken in the middle of Flagstad's "Ewig war ich," though the break comes at a propitious spot where there is a rest. The radiant finale of the *Awakening Scene* and the all too short interruption does not give the listener a chance to adjust himself emotionally. One cannot as yet have everything from LP. Of the tenors who have sung Siegfried in the four recordings of the *Awakening Scene*, Svanholm is a vocal improvement over the first two — Minten and Laubenthal — but he falls far short of Melchior's vocal vehemence. When he pleads with Bruennhilde to succumb to his love, he is far from suggesting the youthfully fervent lover, rather the business man who is fulfilling a job competently and efficiently, which is but another way of saying that the tenor is in good form. Even the bleating Laubenthal in his time conveyed more ardor. Better competency mated to a Flagstad than incompetency.

—P.H.R.

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Record Notes and Reviews



THERE IS IN SOULS a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the Tear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.

—William Cowper

Orchestra

BORODIN: *Symphony No. 1 in E flat major*; **DOHNANYI:** *Symphonic Minutes, Op. 36*; Kurt Graunke conducting the Bavarian Symphony Orchestra. Urania LP 7066, \$5.95.

▲A REALISTIC recording which does justice to the music. Graunke is a first-rate conductor of Borodin's music; one would like to hear him in a performance of the more familiar *Second Symphony in B minor*. He not only captures the mood of this music but confirms its vitality. The contention that the *E flat Symphony* has been unjustly neglected seems justified, in my estimation, on the short acquaintance formed with this recording. Its scherzo and slow movement have equal appeal to the same selections in the *B minor*. The opening movement may prove overlong and somewhat rambling on first hearing. Certainly, its relentless $\frac{3}{4}$ rhythm becomes monotonous, resulting in the change of time in the coda proving most welcome. The scherzo employs a similar rhythm and so does the *Andante*. The finale fortunately changes from the three beats to two in a

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measure. Thus the main weakness of this work is the monotony of its rhythmic construction; otherwise it is solidly constructed and full of healthy vitality. It is well worth hearing. Dohnanyi's little symphonic whimsy is welcome on LP, though it proves somewhat anticlimatic after the Borodin.

—P.H.R.

CORELLI: *Twelve Concerti Grossi, Opus 6*; The Corelli Tri-Centenary String Orchestra conducted by Dean Eckertsen. Vox LP set, 3 discs, \$17.85.

▲THE RECORDING is almost startling in its realism, with a vibrancy of string tone that enhances the performances. An inquiry from Vox brought us the information that the recording was made in Columbia's 30th-Street Studio, surely one of the finest places in existence for outstanding orchestral reproduction. The performances are exceptionally vital, musically adept and flavorful. Mr. Eckertsen, in 1951, (at the age of 23) gave a concert of these works in New York which brought forth praise from attending critics. This year, being the tri-centenary of Corelli's birth, Vox conceived the idea of honoring the occasion by permitting this young and gifted conductor the opportunity to repeat his

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previous concert on records. The orchestra assembled is appropriately small, about 16 strings in all. It has a fine concertato group with Daniel Guilet as first violinist and Frank Miller as cellist. The balance of the players were drawn from the NBC Symphony. Since Eckertsen aimed for authenticity, he should have included a harpsichord or organ, which rightfully belongs to this music.

These performances are vital in the quicker movements and incisive in the fugal ones. The playing is generally clean, though a lack of unanimity in loud attacks is noted. Eckertsen does justice to the slow movements though he does not penetrate their depth of expression. A comparison of his performance of the "Christmas" concerto, No. 8, with the recent one by the Virtuosi di Roma finds the latter players more expressive in the slow movements, notably the final "pastorale." It is good, on the other hand, to find a conductor who performs these works with obvious enthusiasm and ardor. While restraint is proper in the classical slow movements, it should not be extended to the quicker ones as many pedagogical-minded conductors do.

Corelli's twelve concerti grossi are fine examples of the musical art of their time (they date from 1712). In scheme, design and artistic method, they show their composer was a master of wide effects and emotional power. They rate with the best of 18th-century works of their kind.

—P.H.R.

DVORAK: *Slavonic Dances, Op. 46 and Op. 72;* Czech Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Vaclav Talich. Urania LP set 604, 2 discs, \$11.90.

▲**URANIA** has recently made arrangements with the Supraphone Co. in Prague to bring out some of their fine recordings in this country. Mercury issued a set of the *Slavonic Dances* from the same source, but the performances were not recorded or played as well as here. Before the war, Victor brought out the complete dances in two 78 rpm sets by this same orchestra and conductor — then as now officially the leader of the Czech Philharmonic which was regarded as one

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of the finest orchestras in Europe. Time does not seem to have diminished the character and quality of the orchestra, nor the conductor's fine hand in the performance of these skillfully arranged dances by Dvorak based on National dance patterns. Moreover, the Czech engineers seem to have learned a thing or two about recording since the issue of the previous set. The sound is full and rich and rightfully brilliant where needed. As loveable as Dvorak's *Slavonic Dances* are, it cannot be said their enjoyment is sustained in a complete concert like this. The listener might do well to confine his playing to a single record face at a time.

—P.H.R.

HANDEL (arr. Beecham); *The Great Elopement — Excerpts from Suites Nos. 1 and 2;* **MOZART:** *Divertimento in D, K. 131;* Sir Thomas Beecham conducting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. RCA Victor LP LHMV-1030, \$5.95.

▲**THE RECORDING** in the Handel is more live and brilliant than in the Mozart; the latter requires a higher level to do it justice. The Handel derives from Sir Thomas' ballet, arranged from various works by the composer. Several years ago, Victor issued a 78 rpm set containing considerably more excerpts from the ballet. The present group contains six selections which form an attractive suite on their own. Indeed, I think the interest is best sustained in this recording. The Mozart, issued in England on 78 rpm discs in April 1949, was one of several works in an album released at that time to commemorate Sir Thomas' 70th birthday. It is a delightful little work, written in the composer's 17th year at Salzburg. For some reason of his own, Sir Thomas omits the first minuet of the original score, using the second in its place and then inserting a minuet from a later *Divertimento* (K. 287), composed several years later. The latter with its stylistic development, in a wrong key, provoked considerable comment from English critics. Having had the 78 discs for several years, I have become used to the intrusive stranger minuet. The Adagio for strings in this opus

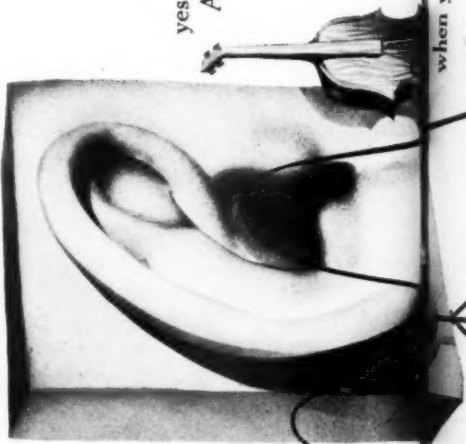
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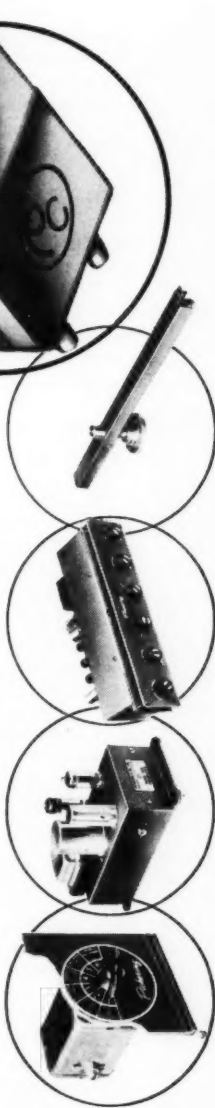
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is a real gem of beauty and grace. The affection that Sir Thomas bestows on the early Mozart makes it live in the rightful way; in music for diversion like this an absorption with its stylistic elegance is of equal importance to its spirit. As a spokesman for Handel, Sir Thomas is in a class by himself, and this latest offering is most welcome. —P.H.R.

MOUSSORGSKY-RAVEL: *Pictures at an Exhibition*; **TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Romeo and Juliet Overture-Fantasia*; **NBC Symphony Orchestra and The Philharmonia Orchestra** conducted by **Guido Cantelli**. RCA Victor LP disc LP-1719; \$5.72.

▲TWO excellent recordings mirroring with satisfactory fidelity two splendid performances conducted by the brilliant young maestro, Guido Cantelli. If the engineering of the *Pictures* is not quite up to Mercury's history-making recording, there is some recompense in the ease and flow of each phrase as Cantelli conducts it. This is a refinement missing in Kubelik's exciting performance. Completely outstanding is the *Romeo and Juliet Overture*. Cantelli's adherence to Tchaikovsky's printed wishes, his care for orchestral sound, his clean outlining of phrase is a model of how this piece can be made to sound like music. Any listener who requires such grace in the rendering of this overture and has no use for barnstorming will find this disc a rare and choice delight. —C.J.L.

MOZART: *Symphony No. 25 in G minor, K. 183*; *Symphony No. 29 in A, K. 201*; Mogens Woeldike conducting the Chamber Orch. of the Danish State Radio. Haydn Society LP HSL-1055, \$5.95.

▲THE RECORDING is realistic in character, yet lacking in the brightness of our domestic releases. Clarification of the bass in Mozart asks for a brightness on the lower end. However, it should be pointed out that the balance between strings and woodwinds is good. Woeldike is a careful conductor, evidently a musician of culture and refinement. His performances of both these delightful, early symphonies of Mozart are tasteful, yet

lacking in a full understanding of their vivaciousness. The outer movements of both are paced on the slow side. The *con brio* marking of the opening movement of the *G minor* is not substantiated. In the minuets, Woeldike favors a slightly slower pace than most, which enhances their grace. No one can quarrel with this, though one may prefer the livelier pace. The all-around satisfying performance of the *G minor* has not been released to date. Klemperer's version, while admirable stylistically, suffers from poor recording and an inferior orchestra. Of the half dozen renditions on LP of the *A major*, both Maag (London LL-286) and Casals (Columbia 4563) challenge Woeldike's. Of these two, Maag's remains my preference with its vivacity and grace, though Casals' version has a charm of its own. —P.H.R.

STRAUSS: *An Alpine Symphony, Op. 64*; Franz Konwitschny conducting the Orchestra of the Munich State Opera. Urania LP 7064, \$5.95.

▲THE RECORDING has realism though it does not quite equal the forcefulness in sound of the composer's version, made with the Bavarian State Orchestra in the middle 1940s. I doubt, however, that a transfer of the older 78 recording would prove more satisfactory than this. Konwitschny does justice to this overlong and somewhat tedious score. I have always admired the perseverance of all conductors whom I have heard play this work.

Strauss' *Alpine Symphony* is an example of one of the hazards to which a modern symphonic work may be exposed, that of a too detailed and picturesque program to permit the proper type of continuous development on its own. One might say that Strauss set out in this work to create a gigantic mushroom, but ended up with an inflated toadstool instead. Its chief attraction, if that word is accepted, is its large orchestration which its composer handles expertly. The symphony is in one long movement almost an hour in length. Its program concerns an Alpine mountain climber, who goes through all sorts of experiences which produce some picturesque musical effects

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and some banal sentiment. Strauss lavished much time and care on this opus, but its thematic material was not inspired.

—P.H.R.

STRAUSS: *Ein Heldenleben*, Op. 40; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Clemens Krauss. London LP disc LL-659, \$5.95.

▲CHANCES are this is the *Ein Heldenleben* you have been waiting for. Mechanically viewed, this disc is right out of London's top drawer, except for a slight lack of clarity and brilliance in the introduction of Strauss' attractive, uneven score. For once, one can experience the full panoply of the battle scene without being driven from the room by ear-piercing distortion or by any unusual microphone monkey business. Pianissimo passages are in proper focus, too. One could hardly ask for greater sonic appeal from a piece as difficult to record as *Heldenleben*.

Clemens Krauss turns in what seems to me the best Strauss interpretation of his recording career. Beecham may have limned a few phrases with more clarity and imagination, Mengelberg may have banked the emotional fire a bit higher. But without sacrificing vitality, Krauss has given this music a warmth, a mellowness of both tone and expression unique in my experience. Surely the Vienna Philharmonic in its palmiest days never played better than this. If a listener can accept the crudities as well as sublimities of *Heldenleben*, he should find this disc long, full, and glorious.

—C.J.L.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *The Sleeping Beauty* (Complete), Op. 66; Paris Conservatory Orchestra conducted by Anatole Fistoulari. London LP set (2 discs) LL-636/7, \$11.90.

▲BECAUSE most listeners recognized Fistoulari's complete *Swan Lake* as one of the lovely things in the LP catalog, it seemed a good bet that sooner or later London would bring forth Tchaikovsky's other great full-length ballet score, *The Sleeping Beauty*. Here it is, costumed in vivid orchestral sound and spun into

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Ballet Suite "Red Poppy"
Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera
Conducted by Hermann Scherchen
2-12 — WAL 210

RESPIGHI

Pines of Rome
Fountains of Rome
Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera
Conducted by Argeo Quadri
1-12 — WL 5167

NATURAL BALANCE



space with handsome resonance indeed. For those who know the Sadler's Wells production of the Petipas-Ivanov masterpiece, there will be no surprises, save that some of the numbers have been arranged in different sequence. And no one need tell that fortunate group what a magnificently apt and intrinsically valuable score Tchaikovsky wrote. For those who know only American ballet companies' versions of the last act (usually presented as *Aurora's Wedding*), there will be additional astonishment at the Russian composer's continual invention and his manipulation of the materials that helped form his balletic idiom. In this listener's view, Tchaikovsky never in his life did anything quite so masterful as this score. Here one receives all of Tchaikovsky's rich gifts of melody, instrumentation, and harmony without the personal insistence of the big symphonies or the diffuseness of his longer chamber works.

It is no good comparing this set with the superb Stokowski performance of half of *Sleeping Beauty*. Of course, no one will deny that Stokowski is just a little more deft, a little more suave in his realization of the music than Fistoulari. But the fact is that Fistoulari leads his fine players with spirit and style and he plays all the music. There will be many who, like your reviewer, won't want to miss a note of it.

—C.J.L.

Concerto

MEDELSSOHN: *Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Op. 25; Rondo Brilliant, Op. 29*; **TURINA:** *Rapsodia Sinfonia*; Moura Lympny (piano) with Philharmonia and London Sym. Orchestras conducted by Rafael Kubelik, Herbert Menges and Walter Susskind. RCA Victor LP LHMV-1025, \$5.95.

▲THE MEDELSSOHN'S are transfers from 78 rpm which have been smoothly contrived with little of the original sheen lost. Of the several LP versions of the facile *G minor Concerto*, this is easily the best as a performance and a recording. Kubelik tends to hurry the opening move-

ment a bit which does not always allow Miss Lympny to achieve the most expressive playing of her part. But together they turn in a lovely rendition of the *Andante*. I have heard pianists say that the *Rondo brilliant* has its attractions but I fail to perceive them. It is a show piece to which Miss Lympny, however does full justice. Turina's *Rhapsody* is a salon piece in the best sense, romantic in style. It is a likable opus, warm and friendly (especially after the empty *Rondo*). Miss Lympny and Mr. Susskind do notable justice to it. Here, the recording is exceptionally fine with an atmospheric luster.

—P.H.R.

MOZART: *Concerto in A, K. 219* (Turkish); Jascha Heifetz (violin) with Sir Malcolm Sargent conducting the London Symphony Orchestra; **BEETHOVEN:** *Romances in G, Op. 40 and in F, Op. 50*; Mr. Heifetz with William Steinberg conducting the RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra. RCA Victor LP LM-9014, \$5.45.

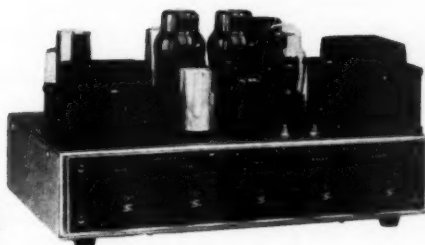
▲REPRODUCTION is excellent in both the Mozart and the Beethoven, though the reverberation in the concerto tends to lend undue weight to the lower end of the orchestra. Heifetz gives polished performances throughout. His approach to Mozart honors restraint in style. While his playing is technically immaculate, he misses for me the gaiety and humor of the opening movement. The melodic articulation of the second movement is, however, the work of a master violinist, though it does not suggest that his heart was truly touched. The mock-Turkish music of the finale is given a truly merry workout. Sargent provides a crisp clean accompaniment to the corner movements and a suave one to the slow one. It has been said that Beethoven's violin *Romances* are difficult to play satisfactorily, but no one would believe this listening to Heifetz who performs them expressively.

—P.H.R.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Concerto No. 1 in B flat minor, Op. 23*; Solomon (piano) with Issay Dobrowen conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra. RCA Victor

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LP LHMV-1028, \$5.95.

▲THIS, the thirteenth LP release of this concerto, made in 1949 by HMV, may not be as startlingly recorded as some others, but it is by far the most imposing performance. Victor would have done well to have released it sometime back in place of the retake by Rubinstein, for Rubinstein did not turn in a performance comparable to his old one, made in the 1930s. There was more pianistic magic and communicative vehemence to that old set than any I have ever heard. The present version parallels it. Here, we have virtuosity employed for musical ends only, eloquence and expressive breadth. The performance has been rightly praised in England as imparting new freshness to the music. It cannot fail to become a best seller in this country.

—P.H.R.

Chamber Music

BEETHOVEN: *String Quartet No. 7 in F, Op. 59, No. 1; New Italian Quartet.* London LP disc LL-673, \$5.95.

▲HERE is a luminous recording of one of the most fabulously beautiful performances any Beethoven quartet has ever received. The impeccable unanimity of the New Italian Quartet (sometimes called the Quartetto Italiano), the warmth and refinement of its tastefully blended and balanced sound is a joy to the ear. This is what great quartet playing is like!

There will, however, be some listeners who may feel that the New Italian Quartet has somewhat falsified the known expressive content of the first movement by over-refinement, by smoothing down the contours of a structure notable for its simplicity and directness. And because of this, they may prefer either the Budapest or Pascal renditions. Myself, I look forward to repeated hearings of some of the most exquisite quartet playing of recent years.

—C.J.L.

MOZART: *Sonata in A, K. 305; Sonata in F, K. 376; Sonata in A, K. 526;* Alexander Schneider (violin) and Ralph

Kirkpatrick (harpsichord). Columbia LP ML-4617. \$5.45.

▲THIS DISC is a continuation of Columbia LP set SL-152, in which the same artists are heard in performances of six other Mozart sonatas. As I said previously, one is filled with mixed feelings — admiration for the fine musicianship of the players and disapproval of the use of the harpsichord. Of course, during Mozart's time, many of these works were played upon the harpsichord as it was ever present in the home. Yet, these sonatas are so eminently pianistic and convey the feeling that the composer designed them for performance on that instrument, hence the listener cannot be blamed if he prefers them played on a piano. Perhaps the ideal way would be on an 18th-century piano, such as Kirkpatrick has used elsewhere in recordings. The harpsichord tends to swamp the violin. To be sure, Mozart thought of the piano as the dominating instrument, but not to the extent of obliterating figurations on the violin or relegating some of its phrases to the background. Barylli and Badura-Skoda are in the process of recording all of the Mozart violin and piano sonatas; so far they have not performed K. 376 and K. 526. As their performance of K. 305 remains more satisfactory, in my estimation, than the present one, I should be tempted under other circumstances to await their renditions of the other two sonatas. Yet, admiring Schneider and Kirkpatrick for their scholarly traversal of these works, I recommend their latest offerings to the attention of all listeners, particularly since their versions of the spontaneous K. 305 and the wonderful K. 526 are the finest so far on LP.

—P.H.R.

RUBBRA: *Quartet No. 2 in E flat; Griller String Quartet.* London 10" LP LS-657, \$4.95.

▲THIS is one of the best Griller recordings I have heard, it brings out the beauty of the ensemble's string tone. The string quartet is the work of a gifted English composer, who is not afraid to wear his heart on his sleeve. In four

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Record Guide

movements, its first and third are poetic in character and longer than the other two. Rubbra has a strong sense of rhythmic fluidity which, according to his notes, is not inhibited by bar lines. The first movement is ruminating in character with the voice of the first violin heard above the contrapuntal weaving of the other strings. The drama here is developed with increasing urgency. The short scherzo, a sort of free wheeling movement, is a *perpetuum mobile* which suggests it should swing into a familiar dance pattern, but instead remains elusive. The slow movement is a threnody — a thing of moving beauty. The free wheeling returns in the finale, though there is a suggestion of pathos. In the end, the music dies away as though all energy were spent. The composer states simply: "The ending is tranquil." The performance is in every way a fine one. I think a great many listeners will not only enjoy their first acquaintance with this work but find it one that grows on them with repeated playings. —P.H.R.

SMETANA: *Quartet No. 1 in E minor (From my Life)*; **DVORAK:** *Quartet in F, Op. 96 (American)*; Stradivari Records String Quartet (Arnold Eidus and Louis Graeler — violins, David Mankovitz — viola, George Ricci — cello. Stradivari LP 613, \$5.95.

▲THE BALANCE and tonal quality of the recording is exceptionally fine. There is none of the stridency of sound which marred the performances of these same two works by the Koeckert Quartet. In some ways, this is a rather extraordinary foursome. The ensemble, as far as I know, is known only in recordings, where they have displayed sound musical intelligence and a homogeneity of purpose in interpretative feeling. One has the feeling that considerable time has been given to the preparation of each performance for recording, with the result that each has something to say. Their rhythm is good and their articulation is true. What they lack is sentient warmth and a greater freedom which would let the music soar more and give it more strength. In the Smetana, I would particularly
February, 1953

have liked more juice. Their Dvorak, on the other hand, stands up against the LP competition and need not bow its head. This is the sort of music-making which the smaller American companies should sponsor more often; it honors American musicians who deserve to be honored. —P.H.R.

Keyboard

BEETHOVEN: *Sonata No. 3 in C, Op. 2, No. 3 and Sonata No. 17 in D minor, Op. 31, No. 2*; **Wilhelm Backhaus** (piano). London LP disc LL-627, \$5.95.

▲AN OFF DAY for Backhaus, even this late in his career, is rare indeed. But the day he recorded this latest version of Beethoven's great *Tempest Sonata* was a black one. Splendid engineering lets one hear slowed-up first and last movements devoid of tension and sweep. Time and time again Backhaus' use of excessive rubato and *luftpausen* at section joints breaks any feeling of continuity. The German pianist plays with his customary alertness and style in the fine little C major sonata, but I don't imagine even this performance will make one want to take the disc. It may seem an unlikely source, I know, but the Novaes version of the D minor sonata seems to me the best now available on LP. Columbia would be wise to reissue the fine Gieseeking performance of almost twenty years ago in its Entre series. —C.J.L.

BEETHOVEN: *Sonatas No. 21 in C, Op. 53; No. 22 in F, Op. 54; and No. 30 in E, Op. 109*; **SOLOMON** (pianist). RCA Victor LP disc LM-1716, \$5.72.

▲OUT of the welter of Beethoven piano sonata recordings we have had during the past two years, this new disc stands out among the very best. First, it is one of the two or three most natural sounding piano recordings I have yet heard — spacious, clean, bright, and resonant. Second, it contains playing up to today's highest standards of three of the finest

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IL RE PASTORE — L'amero, sarò costante (Mozart) Hilde Gueden (soprano) with The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra under Alberto Erede	

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Beethoven sonatas. The best known of these works and the one I find least musically nourishing is the *Waldstein*, Op. 53. It is essentially a pianist's piece (especially in the corner movements) and to make it glow one must have the tonal brilliance, the scholarship, and the huge dynamic range of a Solomon. I believe this is the most effective version of this work yet recorded.

The two-movement Op. 54, though little played, is one of Beethoven's most charming piano works. And except for a failure to keep every strand of the complex second movement absolutely clear, Solomon serves it handsomely. Backhaus' is the preferable version on LP, especially in the latter regard.

The great Op. 109 has, to my mind, never before received an entirely satisfactory recording and performance on LP. Here, however, is one that fills the bill. Though Solomon does not outline his phrases in the dense-textured variations of the final movement with quite the miraculous clarity of Schnabel (his superb 1935 performance has at last been rereleased), he does everything else anyone could possibly expect. And, I must say, his dynamic shading is so uncommonly faithful that if space were available this facet of Solomon's technical mastery would deserve a paragraph. Here is a record no one should miss hearing.—C.J.L.

CHOPIN: *Waltzes No. 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12; Nocturnes, Op. 9, No. 2; Op. 15, No. 1; Op. 27, No. 1; Barcarolle, Op. 60; Etude, Op. 25, No. 2; Alfred Cortot* (pianist). HMV LP disc LHMV-1032, \$5.95.

▲WITH all due respect for Cortot's limpidity and brilliance of tone and his imaginative curving of phrases here and there, his fingers are not spry enough today to handle many of the really difficult passages in the divers Chopin selections listed above. Clear, natural recording merely emphasizes a standard of execution far below what we have come to expect. And for your reviewer's taste, there is far too much fussiness with line, tempo rubato, and the like for many of these pieces to emerge with much sense of continuity.

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Cortot has made many contributions to the phonograph, but his latest disc cannot be counted among them. —C.J.L.

CHOPIN: *Ballades, Op. 47 and 52; Etude, Op. 10, No. 3; Impromptu, Op. 29; Nocturne, Op. 55, No. 1; Scherzo, Op. 20; Vladimir Horowitz* (piano). RCA Victor LP disc LM-1707, \$5.72.

▲BASS needs boosting on this one if proper balance is to be achieved. Plenty of clarity and resonance, however, as well as a disturbing periodic swish on side one. No other famous pianist working today can quite match Horowitz's technical skill. No other, happily, gets in the way of his music as often either. It is no news that Horowitz seldom plays any tune without teasing it, or that he repeatedly demonstrates questionable taste in rhythm (particularly in his use of accent) and indulges in the kind of plastic distortion that produces a roaring *crescendo* and exhausted, cheering audiences. Just listen to the end of the *B minor scherzo* and you will hear what I mean. As one French reviewer put it after Horowitz's return to Paris last year: he doesn't make much music, but what he can do with a piano! His name ought to be "Mr. Steinway."

It must be pointed out that both the front of the disc envelope and the notes on the back list two works in addition to those that Horowitz actually plays. It will be an unhappy record purchaser, indeed, who fails to audition this disc at the store and finds when he gets home that he hasn't got either the *Nocturne, Op. 72, No. 1* or the *Etude, Op. 10, No. 4*. —C.J.L.

MOZART: *Sonata in B flat, K.570; Fantasy and Fugue in C, K.394; Suite in C, K.399; Ralph Kirkpatrick* (piano). Bartok Records LP disc BRS-912, \$5.95.

▲THERE has lately been a rash of recordings enlightening us as to the way Mozart heard his piano compositions during most of his life. This latest disc ranks high in a noteworthy list. The recording is most life-like and typical of the fine work lately accomplished by Bartok Records. Kirkpatrick's perform-

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ances of a handful of Mozart's choicest piano works are musically sound and tonally delicious. John Challis, who produced the piano used for the occasion, has rare skill, as everyone must know by now; and it is once more a pleasure to salute him. It should be pointed out that the *Suile in C* is new to LP records, and that Badura Skoda's playing of the *Fantasy and Fugue in C* on both a modern and a Mozart piano is available on Westminster discs and worth your attention.

—C.J.L.

Voice

BACH: *Cantatas Nos. 122 and 133;* Margit Opawsky (soprano); Hilde Rossl-Majdan (alto); Waldemar Kmentt (tenor); Harold Hermann (bass); Vienna Chamber Choir and Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Michael Gielen. Bach Guild BG 523, \$5.95.

▲THE FIRST of these cantatas, *Das neugeborne Kindelein*, is a particularly lovely work. In its deeply affecting joy, it moves gravely from the touching prelude to the final smiling statement of the chorale. *Ich Freue Mich in Dir* is another Christmas work. It sounds as though it is composed entirely of folk-tunes as it magnifies the Lord with a purposely naive but basically profound devotion. The performances are excellent, as is the recording. Of particular note are the fine bass solos and the expert delineation of Michael Geilen.

—D.R.

BEETHOVEN: *Ruins of Athens, Op. 113;* Annie Woudt (soprano), David Hollestelle (baritone), Netherlands Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra conducted by Walter Goehr. Concert Hall LP disc CHS-1158, \$5.95.

▲HERE is a new effort in the direction of completing the entire Beethoven catalog on LP. And a fine one it is, too. Luminous and solid sound; lively musical values from conductor, orchestra and chorus; and a most agreeable new voice — that of David Hollestelle — are the

virtues of this presentation. If this dramatic masque, in spite of everyone's care, still faintly resembles a pot-boiler, I'm afraid there is no one but Beethoven and his love of money to blame. Beethoven, like Shaw, feared poverty worse than death. A reasonable attitude, to be sure, when one considers that without the commission from *Ruins of Athens* and *King Stephen, Hungary's First Benefactor* (the two Kotzebue plays for which Beethoven provided incidental music), we might not have got, let us say, the master's last five string quartets. Except for the well known *Marcia alla Turca*, the *Ruins of Athens* music will be new to most listeners. It contains, as a matter of record, an overture of some power, three choruses, a duet, an orchestral interlude, a baritone recitative and aria, and the Turkish march. There is also a great deal of spoken dialogue, but it's not on this disc. The way the plot of the play runs I don't think any one will miss it.

—C.J.L.

BRAHMS: *Liebeslieder Waltzes, Op. 52; Neue Liebeslieder Waltzes, Op. 65;* Erna Hassler (soprano), Hetty Pluemacher (alto), Albert Weikenmeier (tenor), Franz Kelch (bass), Hans Michael and Hans Priegnitz (piano); Oceanic OCS-28, \$5.95.

▲A VOCAL quartet suits these works better than does a choir and this group performs with a sort of florid enthusiasm which does the music full justice. *Opus 52* sounds like a series of well-tempered drinking-songs and *Opus 65*, the darker of the two works, is somewhat more mordant in its sentimentality. This is a small performance and the recording enhances the effect. It has a slightly enclosed sound but all the parts are distinct and the piano is properly subdued.

—D.R.

CRITIC'S CHOICE: *Le Violette* (Scarlatti); Tito Schipa with Orch., *Semele* — *Where'er You Walk* (Handel); Lawrence Tibbett with Stewart Wille at the piano, *Semele* — *O Sleep, Why dost thou leave me* (Handel); Dorothy Maynor with Orch., *Nozze di Figaro* — *Venite, inginocchiatevi* (Mozart); Elisabeth Schumann with Orch., *Nozze di*

Figaro — *Dove son* (Mozart); Maria Cebotari with Orch., *Impromptu in A flat*, Op. 29 (Chopin); Sigrid Onegin with piano, *Kennst du das Land* (Wolf); Kerstin Thorborg with piano; *Hero-diade* — *Salome! Salome!* (Massenet); John Charles Thomas with Orch., *Lohengrin* — *In fernem Land* (Wagner); Richard Crooks with Orch.; *Falstaff* — *E sogno*. (Verdi); Leonard Warren with Orch., *Ariadne* — *So war es mit Pagliazzo* (Strauss); Maria Ivogun with Orch. RCA Victor LP LCT-1115, \$5.72.

▲THE CRITIC is Irving Kolodin. Though his selections do not make for true programmatic continuity, they are nonetheless rewarding for their eclecticism. Whether or not we concur with his every choice, we have to admit that he has chosen an unusually interesting group of vocal recordings. Personal preferences, the English critic Edward Sackville West once protested in a letter to us, "seem to me very egotistical, but I suppose that is really the idea." But the critic as well as "every man," as Alexander Pope once said, "has just as much vanity as he wants understanding." And, this critic in his notes gives a just reason for understanding even though we are not in agreement with all his choices. His two Handel selections, for example, would be definitely crowded out for me by McCormack's better sung *Where'er You Walk* and Alma Gluck's *O sleep*, a performance in which she was coached by Sembrich. Onegin's vocalise on a Chopin *Impromptu* owns little appeal for me; there are other finer recordings of hers which display her voice as well. For the late Maria Cebotari's *Dove son*, I am sure many will join me in saying, "Thank you, Mr. Kolodin." It is indeed an "unforgettable performance," which we might not have had on LP except for Mr. Kolodin.

I am glad to find Richard Crooks honored by one of his finest recordings — a selection in which he was coached by the late Walter Damrosch. The finale of this unusual program, Ivogun's spell-binding performance of that fiendishly difficult aria from Strauss' *Ariadne* is

going to make a lot of listeners happy. It has been a record hard to acquire in recent years. The Schipa is a gem, and Elizabeth Schumann's Mozart air a lovely memento of her exquisite artistry.

—P.H.R.

HANDEL: *Israel in Egypt*; Jutta Welting (soprano), Irmgard Bislas (soprano), Ebba Muenzigg (contralto), Wilhelm Horst (tenor), Gerhard Raeker (basso), Herbert Runghagen (basso), Combined Berlin Chamber Choirs and Berlin Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Helmut Koch. Bach Guild set BG 521-22, two LP discs, \$11.90.

▲SINCE this recording was made in Berlin it is not surprising that the German translation of the English text is used. In the liner notes we are told that the performance is based upon the Peters Edition, "which follows Handel's original manuscript," with cuts, "in accordance with usual practice." In other words, this is not a specially prepared presentation, but a reasonably typical one such as we might hear any time in Germany. We can therefore expect to hear a well-trained chorus that knows its way through the score, and in this we are not disappointed. But not a great deal more can be said for the recording.

Israel in Egypt is considered one of Handel's top masterpieces. There is much in it that is famous — the *Hailstone Chorus*, the contralto solo about the frogs and the chorus about the flies, the duet for two basses, *The Lord is a Man of War*, the aria *Thou shalt bring them in* and perhaps above all the final chorus, *Sing ye to the Lord*, before which, according to Streatfield, "everything else pales". There is so much of this quality that one is ever amazed to go on discovering more.

When the Handel Society recording was released about a year and a half ago critical welcome was mingled with disappointment. The fertility of the composer's imagination and invention were only partially revealed by the conductor and his forces. The soloists were good but the chorus seemed not to have penetrated very deep into the mysteries of the work. Now the positions are reversed in the new version. The exciting *Hail-*

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stone scene comes alive as it did not do in the English performance, and the orchestral delineation of the swarms of flies is well brought out. One can admire too the pastoral *But as for His people* and the terrific *But the waters over-whelmed their enemies*. But of the soloists only the tenor is passable. At times one of the sopranos is almost painful to hear. On the whole, then, of the two performances I would prefer the English, though we must still wait to hear the masterpiece adequately presented. —P.L.M.

THE INTERNATIONAL EISTEDD-

FOD: A musical documentary of the International Choral and Folk-Dance Festival held at Llangollen, North Wales, July 1952. Jack Bornoff (narrator). Westminster set WAL 209, two LP discs, \$11.90.

▲THIS recording of the annual musical competition in North Wales was sponsored by the International Music Council (UNESCO). It brings us a fresh and novel experience and includes several very worthwhile musical moments.

Groups from various countries, not only of the British Isles but of the continent of Europe and our own Middle-West, perform such contrasting things as folk dances, madrigals, a part-song by Elgar and one by Hugo Distler, Schubert's lovely *Twenty-third Psalm*, an amusing Austrian folk ballad and a motet by Victoria. Most entertaining of all, perhaps, is the contest between three groups from Manchester, Minnesota and Bologna — in Banchieri's *Contraponto bestiale*. That the standard of performance is high for non-professional groups is hardly to be wondered at, for these are the pick of their countries. The zest of the singing and playing is no less notable than the worthwhile selections performed. A running commentary by Jack Bornoff explains the program as it progresses, and beside that we have extensive notes in the liner. Appropriately the set closes with an example of Welsh "Penillion singing" to the bardic harp, the text being "a poem of peace."

—P.L.M.

February, 1953

MARCH RELEASES

SCHUBERT

Complete Music to "Rosamunde"
Op. 26
Hilde Roessel-Majdan, contralto, /
Akademischer
Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera
Conducted by Dean Dixon
WL 5182

MOZART

Concerto for Piano and Orch., No. 21,
C Major, K. 467
Concerto for Piano and Orch., No. 26,
D Major, K. 537
("Coronation")
Jaerg Demus—Piano
Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera
Conducted by Milan Horvath
WL 5183

RICHARD STRAUSS

Suite for Wind Group
in B Flat Major, Op. 4
Serenade in E Flat Major, Op. 7
Vienna Philharmonic Wind Group
WL 5185

SCARLATTI

Sonatas for Harpsichord, Vol. 4
Fernando Valenti—Harpsichord
WL 5186

BACH

English Suites (Complete)
Fernando Valenti—Harpsichord
WAL 305



Instrumental

MODERN AMERICAN ART SONGS:

Sara Carter (soprano); Bernhard Weiser (piano); New Editions NE-2, \$5.95.

▲THIS is the second issue of a forward looking company and it realizes the promise of the first in selection, performance and recording. Israel Citkowitz is represented by three songs from *Chamber Music*, based on the Joyce poems. Rhapsodic in mood feeling they exhibit a very definite feeling for lyric writing. Theodore Chanler contributes *Eight Epilaphs* on texts of Walter De La Mare. In many ways the most conservative works in the collection they are also among the most soundly constructed. William Flanagan's cool understatement is responsible for much of the charm of his music. His five songs, suggesting Copland in feeling, are on texts by a number of poets; Hopkins' *Heaven Haven* is among the best. Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, as set by the twenty-five year-old Russell Smith, are among the most interesting songs in the collection. Sensitive and evocative they possess the virtue of direct statement and complete compatability with the text. Miss Carter's performance is one of real beauty. She possesses a light tonal quality and a vocal mobility which suits this music admirably. Mr. Weiser, remembered for his work on this company's first issue, is completely competent. The recording, though of no great depth, well delineates both voice and piano. —D.R.

SCHUETZ: *The Passion according to Saint Matthew; Symphoniae Sacre, No. 9, Frohlockel mit Haenden; No. 10, Lobet den Hereen;* Max Meili (Evangelist), Herbert Runghenhausen (Jesus), Horst Wilhelm (Peter), Ulrich Neitzel and Heina Braemer (two witnesses), Gerhard Raeker (Pilate), Bernard Michelis (Judas), Reinhold Patzke (Caiaphes), Edith Jacob and Ebbe Muenzig (two servants), Lucie Moller-Jarmer (Pilate's Wife) and Combined Berlin

Chamber Choirs conducted by Helmut Koch. Bach Guild set BG 519-20, two LP discs, \$11.90.

▲THERE is considerable contrast between this performance and the earlier one from Stuttgart which I reviewed last June. As I previously pointed out, the *Passion* has several of the elements of the Bach masterpieces, but it has no arias and is done throughout without accompaniment. The burden of the work falls upon the tenor Evangelist, though the various characters are represented by other voices and the chorus has its exciting moments impersonating the crowd. Though Claus Stemmann, the Stuttgart Evangelist, sang with more freedom than in the recording of Schuetz' *Saint John Passion*, his tendency to cut his narrative up into yard lengths, made for monotony. Meili, the Berlin Evangelist, is an old friend from pre-war Anthologie Sonore recordings. Though his voice shows signs of age, his artistry is still there. His performance is in another world than Stemmann's, for he knows the value of every word and sings with the greatest expressiveness, intensity and freedom within the musical structure. The other soloists are good in their parts, especially the high-voiced Judas and Pilate's Wife, who makes an enduring impression with her one line. The chorus, on its mettle, makes us realize once more the towering genius of Bach's great forerunner. The fourth side is filled with two of the *Symphoniae sacrae* sung in fine style by Meili. The reproduction is just under the highest standards. —P.L.M.

VERDI: *Luisa Miller — Quando le sere al placidio; La Traviata — De' miei bollenti spiriti; Macbeth — Ah! La paterna mano; PUCCINI: Recondita armonia and E lucevan le stelle; Fanciulla del West — Ch'ella mi credo; Manon Lescaul — No! Pazzo son! Turandot — Non piangere Liu; Mario Del Monaco (tenor) with Alberto Erede conducting the Orch. of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome. London 10" LP LS-670, \$4.95.*

▲HERE we have a phenomenal tenor

The American Record Guide

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voice exploited with varying results. Del Monaco's high tones are sensational. When his singing has poise and power, it is beautiful, but when it loses power his quality is not as expressive. He has not as yet learned to color his voice nor to sing softly. If he ever conquers these requisites in singing, he will become one of the most satisfying tenors of our time. Meanwhile, he has competitors on records in all these arias, whom it is unlikely the listener would be willing to dispose of in his favor. But that should not preclude the listener from buying this disc which offers some heroic singing rare in this day. Excellent recording and full sounding orchestral accompaniments. —J.N.

EDITORIAL NOTES

(Continued from page 169)

program of recorded music for an evening in mutual agreement. I cannot say that records "a la solitaire" have been completely satisfying to me. It has always seemed to me a selfish business to listen alone. Music is an art that should be shared. Of course, there are types of people with whom one simply cannot enjoy music. As a critic for a quarter of a century, I have encountered all sorts of so-called friendly listeners and learned how to avoid those who disrupt a musical concert at home or abroad.

I have never believed in fostering music or anything else on anyone who comes into my home. You can have many different types of friends in different walks of life. Few thrust their hobbies or business occupations on disinterested people, so why should I? I go to boxing and wrestling matches with friends who have little or no interest in music. I do not try to convert them unless they express an interest in music. Many have, but not all were convertible.

Let's go back to Dr. Elbin who arrives at the conclusion that "fanciers of reproduced music are happiest when they have things their own way." He's got a point!

But having your own way can become mighty boring — or should. I have found through the years that some of my most enjoyable evenings of reproduced music have been when a mutually interested friend has visited me and selected the program. Many things I haven't heard for a long time, or perhaps have unwittingly neglected, have been brought out with the result that I had a far pleasanter evening of musical enjoyment than I might have had on my own. There is a challenge in "records a la solitaire" which I think is best answered by Ralph Waldo Emerson — "The selfish man suffers more from his selfishness than he from whom that selfishness withholds some important benefit."

Recent "Pops" Releases

Rodgers-Hammerstein, II: *Oklahoma* (complete score); Nelson Eddy, Virginia Haskins, Kaye Ballard, Wilton Clary, Lee Cass, Portia Nelson, David Atkinson, David Morris, Chorus and Orchestra conducted by Lehman Engel; Columbia ML-4598, \$5.45.

▲**EDDY** is surprisingly good. He doesn't steal the limelight — but proves a true member of the cast. Vocally, the cast is excellent. The recording is not well balanced; the orchestra is often pushed into the background — which shouldn't happen in a score like this.

Romberg: *The Desert Song*; Kathryn Grayson and Tony Martin, with Orchestra conducted by Arthur Fiedler; Victor LPM-3105, \$3.85.

▲**COMPETENT** and full-blooded singing without real enthusiasm. All the important numbers are included without pretence to continuity. Excellent orchestral support. Well recorded.

Sousa: *Marches*; Goldman Band. Columbia CL-6228, \$3.00.

▲**BIG** and brassy, with plenty of pep but curiously dead in sound as if the band were recorded in a small, "dead studio. The record lacks the outdoor atmosphere this music demands. Eight of the most popular marches make up the collection.

This Is Hal Kemp: Hal Kemp and His Orchestra. Victor LPT-3016, \$3.15.

▲**ANOTHER** "Treasury" collection of past hits representing the band at its best.

Music for Dining; Victor LPM-1000, \$4.19. **Music for Relaxation;** Victor LPM-1001, \$4.19. **Music for Reading;** Victor LPM-1002, \$4.19. All by The Melachrino Strings.

▲THESE three discs are subtitled "Moods in Music." Each contains nine or ten pieces ranging from arrangements of popular songs, through salon pieces, to light classics. All are played with taste and smoothness by the famous British band noted for its string section. Excellent recording.

Glenn Miller Concert, Volume 3
Glenn Miller's Band. Victor LPT-3001, \$3.15.

▲OFF-THE-AIR transcriptions of the celebrated orchestra at its best (1940-1942). Audience reaction and all. Some gems like like *Dipper Mouth Blues*, *Fanhat Slomp*, *Are You Rusty*, *Gale*, and *Intermezzo*. Indifferent recording, excusable in the interest of jazz history.

This is Artie Shaw and His Orchestra: Victor LPT-3003, \$3.15. **This is Benny Goodman and His Quartet:** Victor LPT-3004, \$3.15. **This is Tommy Dorsey and His Orchestra:** Victor LPT-3005, \$3.15. **This is Oscar Peterson and His Orchestra:** Victor LPT-3006, \$3.15. **This is Artie Shaw and His Gramercy Five:** Victor LPT-3013, \$3.15. **This is Ray Noble and His Orchestra:** Victor LPT-3015, \$3.15. **This is Duke Ellington and His Orchestra:** Victor LPT-3017, \$3.15. **This is Tommy Dorsey and His Orchestra:** Victor LPT-3018, \$3.15.

▲THE first batch in a series of records on which Victor intends to reissue, memorialize, and preserve top performances of great jazz artists, orchestras, and combinations at the height of their greatness. The earliest record included is Ray Noble's *Goodnight, Sweetheart* (1931) and the most recent, Tommy Dorsey's *Then I'll Be Happy* (1946). A monumental task for which Victor deserves nothing but praise. There are many choice plums in these collections that should gladden the hearts of every jazz lover. Then, besides, there can always be more "This is" releases.

The recordings are as good as can be expected, considering the age of the originals. Some first class jazz connoisseurs contribute good, sensible, informative notes.

Nat "King" Cole's 8 Top Pops. Capitol H-9110, \$2.98.

▲A CONVENIENT collection of recent King Cole hits aimed to please his fans, but no great shakes musically. Top-notch recording.

200

Hollywood's Best: Rosemary Clooney and Harry James. Columbia CL-6224, \$3.

▲EIGHT Academy Award-winning songs interpreted by two popular artists in their most likeable manner. A versatile voice and style plus a virtuoso trumpet make a particularly happy duet.

South African Folk Songs: Josef Marais and Miranda; Columbia CL-6226, \$3.

▲THIS disc does not rightfully belong in a listing of "popular" records. It is a classic of touchingly simple songs of a simple people. Essentially, this is folk music, slightly adapted, but well sung in a unique, intimate style by a celebrated husband and wife team.

Chet Atkins Gallopin' Guitar: Victor, LPM-3079, \$3.15.

▲A RARE guitarist with a rare sense of rhythm. The music is "Country-Western" style, if it must be classified, but its overtones are hot jazz, to use a passe term.

Curtain Call, Volume 1: Ted Lewis, Eddie Cantor, Jimmy Durante, Sophie Tucker; Decca DL-7018, \$3.85.

Curtain Call, Volume 2: Bing Crosby, The Andrews Sisters, The Ink Spots, The Mills Brothers. Decca DL-7019, \$3.85.

▲DECCA draws on its rich archives of recordings. The "Curtain Call" series is devoted to the great performers of our time and the recorded songs which helped to make them famous. All numbers collected here are indelibly identified with the artists. The recordings sound their age but one can't deny the nostalgic thrill of hearing again *When My Baby Smiles At Me* as Ted Lewis sings it. Or Cantor's *Makin' Whoopee*, Durante's *Inka Dinka Doo*, Sophie Tucker's *Some of These Days*, Bing's *Where the Blue of the Night*, etc. Records are for people who like to remember.

This Is Glenn Miller: Glenn Miller and his Orchestra, Victor LPT-3002, \$3.15.

▲GENERALLY considered to have been the most popular organization in the history of dance bands, this disc offers a good sampling of the band when it was at the top of its stride — 1939 to 1941 — in the Glen Island Casino days. There are some excellent examples of Miller's identifying style — lead clarinet plus four saxes. All the numbers included in this collection have long been favorites with Miller fans.

The American Record Guide

Romberg: The Student Prince: Dorothy Kirsten, Robert Rounseville, Genevieve Warner, Clifford Harvout, Chorus and Orchestra under Lehman Engel, Columbia ML-4592, \$5.45.

▲**VOCALLY-** this is a splendid performance. Which is not surprising when you consider that the cast is from top-drawer opera. But there lies its chief fault: the performance is a bit too arty for such light music. However, it's the only complete version on LP.

Josef Marais and Miranda: Columbia CL-6225, \$3.

▲**AN** excellent complement to CL-6226, for here, too, are some South African songs — many of which are adaptations of European melodies. One in particular, the *Umbira Melody* is a haunting piece. This disc has instrumental and vocal trio accompaniment.

Graettinger: City of Glass: Stan Kenton and His Orchestra, Capitol H-353, \$3.

▲**THIS** is not jazz, though it has semblances of jazz elements. It is abstract music, daring in its way but utterly devastating to the nervous system. It is not for the timid or the uninitiated. Its four parts are — entitled: *Entrance to the City, The Structures, Dance Before the Mirror, Reflections*. A stunning performance by Stan Kenton's orchestra and a marvelous engineering job by Capitol.

Fascinating Rhythms: Percy Faith and His Orchestra, Columbia CL-6203, \$3.

▲**A COLLECTION** of some of Percy Faith's previously released best, with emphasis on color, mood, and rhythm.

Melodies for a Sentimental Mood: Paul Weston and His Orchestra. Columbia CL-6204, \$3.

▲**WESTON'S** apprenticeship as arranger with Tommy Dorsey, Bob Crosby, Rudy Valle, and Phil Harris is quite evident. The T.D. touch is most noticeable, and at times, because of a fine lead trumpet, the effect is like that of hearing Bunny Berigan again. Very pleasant.

Dorothy Kirsten Sing Tropical Love Songs: Dorothy Kirsten, with Russell Case and His Orchestra, Columbia ML-2212, \$4.

▲**MISS KIRSTEN** sings some simple popular songs with an opulent tone and a keen understanding of their style and rhythm. Good recording.

Bunk Johnson: Columbia GL-520, \$4.85.

▲**THIS** disc is sub-titled: "The Last Testament of a Great New Orleans Jazzman." Recorded on December 23, 24,

and 26, 1947, with a group of musicians chosen by Bunk himself, these 12 jazz standards, rags, pop tunes, a cowboy song, and a Tin Pan Alley rumba, were the last to be made by the colorful William Geary Johnson, trumpeter extraordinary and last surviving member of Buddy Bolden's Band, the first great jazz band in history. Bunk suffered his first stroke in 1948 and he died July 7, 1949.

Jazz connoisseurs will need no special urging to buy this disc. They know what to expect from the great jazzman, who, at 68, could play *real* jazz as few other musicians could and with an individuality undimmed by the years. They will not be disappointed.


The musicians who joined Bunk for this last great recording date were Alphonso Steele, drummer; Garvin Bushell, sax; Ed Cuffee, trombone; Don Kirkpatrick, piano; Danny Barker, guitar; and Wellman Braud, bass. The recordings were made in Carnegie Recital Hall, with a single unmonitored microphone, which is not the way records are usually made but the way Bunk Johnson would have wanted his band to sound from the dance floor. Jazz fans owe Columbia and George Avakian, who was responsible for rescuing these recordings from oblivion, a debt of gratitude.

Benny Goodman 1937-38 Jazz Concert No. 2: The Goodman Orchestra, Trio, and Quartet, Columbia SL-180, \$10.90. ▲**COLUMBIA** has done it again! It has issued a set of authentic Goodman recordings which is unique and which surpasses even the fantastically successful Benny Goodman Carnegie Jazz Concert album of two years ago.

This is by the same all-star Goodman Trio, Quartet, and Orchestra — Harry James, Lionel Hampton, Gene Krupa, Teddy Wilson, Ziggy Elman, Jess Stacy, Chris Griffin, and all the rest of the great musicians who helped Benny make "swing" a household word in the thirties. They play with the same fire and abandon which characterized the Carnegie Hall album. But this time the music was accurately balanced for the microphone by radio engineers, for these recordings were made from "air-checks" of late evening broadcasts from all over the country — whether the band was broadcasting from the Manhattan Room of the Hotel Pennsylvania or the Palomar in Los Angeles.

The album is a wonderfully exciting experience and it should be on every jazz lover's shelf alongside Columbia SL-160. The two albums represent the best of one of the great periods in jazz by some of the musicians who helped to make it so.

— Enzo Archetti


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
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